Maharlika

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Salud on Saipan

Philippine fashion guru and haute couture designer extraordinaire Rene Salud is currently on Saipan to dress up an 8-year-old girl who will compete in tonight's Little Ms. CNMI.



Kate 'n' Kamiseta

Kamiseta, leading specialty retailer of fashionable casual apparel, accessories and footwear, brings to Manila's largerthan-life billboards the larger-than-life Kate Hudson.

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Where's P8B OWWA fund?

Senate will investigate where OFW fees went By TJ BURGONIO, VOLT CONTRERAS the OWWA fund," said Estrada, who chairs the PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER he Senate announced an inquiry into the Philippine Ambassador to Lebanon Alfrancis funds of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, amid bickering between the Philippine ambassador in Beirut and

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada said he would conduct an investigation into claims OWWA lacked funds to repatriate besieged Filipinos out of Lebanon.

the evacuation of Filipinos from Lebanon.

the home office on the alleged lack of money for

"Where is the P7.6-billion OWWA fund? Why does Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo only allocate P150 million to repatriate our compatriots from Lebanon? I want to have a full accounting of

Senate oversight committee on labor and employ-

Bichara said Tuesday that he was running out of money for the OFWs in Lebanon and had vet to receive fresh funds from Manila. Despite a rebuke from the home office, Bichara said on Wednesday he was standing by his earlier statement.

Fr. Agustin Advincula, whose Congregation of the Mission runs the Church of the Miraculous Medal in Beirut where thousands of domestic helpers had sought shelter, had also expressed concern over the lack of funds for repatriation, Estrada said.

WHERE'S Page 2

Black Eyed Peas visits Malacañang

Hiphop artists receive Presidential Medal of Merit

By LIRA DALANGIN-FERNAN-DEZ INQ7.NET

The Black Eyed Peas did what coup plotters and other destabilizers have so far failed to do.

Performing two of their hits

RELATED NEWS

- □ Pinoy 'Pea' brings 'House' down. PAGE
- ☐ BEP concert for landslide victims.

most popular among Filipinos, the award-winning hiphop group brought the Palace down.

Filipino-American Pineda aka Apl.de.ap, together with another Pea, William Adams aka will.i.am, went to Malacañang Thursday to receive the Presidential Medal of Merit.

The decoration is conferred upon individuals, Filipino or foreign, who, among others, have gained "prestige for the country in an international

BLACK Page 2

ALEJANDRO BADILLES

Working hard for his dreams

ROTA—From feeding pigs and cultivating crops, to cleaning and baking bread, Alejandro Badilles rose to become what he is now, a busy entrepreneur, a community leader, and coordinator of an important program of the Northern Marianas College-Cooperative Research Educational and Extension Services.

"My story is long and complicated. My friends tell me it's a good material for Maala-ala Mo Kaya [a television program in the Philippines that features true-to-life stories]," admits Badilles, who is the acting NMC-CREES coordinator here.

WORKING Page 2



Black Eyed Peas rapper Allen Pineda popularly known as Apl.de.ap, center, dances as another member William James Adams Jr., second from left, sings as they did a musical number at the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila on Thursday July 27, 2006.









PINOYNEWS

Free health screening

The Philippine Consulate General's Overseas Workers Welfare Administration is informing the Filipino community of the free health screening program scheduled this Aug. 6, 2006 from 9am to 12 noon at the ground floor of the Nauru building, Susupe. Individuals who would like to avail of blood sugar testing should fast (no food or water) from midnight of Aug. 5, 2006 up to the time of their check up. (PR)

BLACK

FROM PAGE 1

event, in the fields of literature, the sciences, the arts, entertainment, and other civilian fields of endeavor that foster national pride and artistic excellence."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita conferred the award for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who was down with flu.

The two other members of the group—Stacy "Fergie" Ferguson and Jaime Gomez aka Taboo were not around.

"It's a great honor to be in the Palace. I'm grateful to the Filipinos supporting the Black Eyed Peas. This was a big day for me," Pineda, who donned a white and red tie-dyed barong and white and red rubber shoes, told reporters later in an

Palace employees, some with children in tow, guest students, and journalists thronged into the Ceremonial Hall as soon as it was announced that the Grammy award-winning hiphop group was coming.

The crowd cheered as soon as the intro for the Peas' first song, "The Apl Song," whose Filipino lyrics and backing melody are based on the song "Balita," an original composition of the 70s Filipino folk rock group Asin, came on.

Gamely giving in to requests for a second song, Pineda and Adams launched into "Bebot," which triggered some dancing onstage and had normally staid Palace officials toe-tapping.

"Bebot" is the Filipino slang for girl and talks about various aspects of the Filipino lifestyle. The hit tune is in the group's latest album, "Monkey Business."

Ermita said he admires Pineda, who hails from Sapang Bato in Angeles City, for being proud of his Filipino roots.

Pineda also thanked fellow Pea Adams for adopting him when he first set foot in the US.

Adams said he admires Pineda for his courage and for his persistence to pursue his dreams.

"He brought the Philippines to the whole world." Adams said.

The Black Eyed Peas are in the Philippines for a concert on Thursday to raise funds for victims of the February landslide in Leyte that left more than 1,000 people dead.

The concert is also part of the Peas' "Monkey Business

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!



The group from Saipan that participated in the recent Philippine Ambassadors/Consuls General Tour in the Philippines poses with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, seated center, at Malacañang Palace. Seated left to right are Jeff Schorr, field representative of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs; Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo; Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Brilliantes; and Philippine Consul General to Saipan Wilfredo DL. Maximo. Standing from left to right are Philippine Tourism Undersecretary Eduardo Jarque; Marianas Visitors Authority comptroller Tess Castro and her husband Agustin Castro; Hannah Schorr; Mario Espeleta of the Pacific Development Inc.; and Atty. Reynaldo Yana.

WHERE'S

FROM PAGE 1

Estrada's move came after Sen. Richard Gordon filed a resolution seeking an inquiry into the plans and resources of government agencies for the repatriation of the estimated 34,000 workers in Lebanon.

P8.1-B fund

On Wednesday, Marianito Roque, OWWA administrator, said the OWWA fund stood at P8.1 billion as of December

Roque earlier denied that the evacuation was being hampered by budgetary problems. He said the \$2 million released by the agency would be enough for 2,000 evacuees and that more funds would be released if needed.

Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos Jr. yesterday also rejected criticisms the evacuation of Filipinos lacked funding and said the best evidence against this was the steady movement of evacuees from war-torn Lebanon over the past two weeks.

"If there were really not enough funds, how come there has been a daily movement (of evacuees) from Beirut to Damascus since Saturday? That's the best evidence we have on the ground," said Conejos, point the overseas Filipino workers.

Duty calls Conejos faced reporters with a hoarse voice. At one point, he

turned emotional when he related that his 86-year-old mother in Ormoc City had suffered a stroke on Wednesday --a family emergency he could not immediately attend to because of the OFW "crisis."

man in Manila for the return of

"Although my first impulse was to run to her, I can't just leave because I have a job to do," said Conejos.

"That movement will continue as long as there's an OFW who wants to be repatriated," he stressed during a press briefing at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), which put "Oplan Sagip OFW sa Lebanon" into motion on July 14.

working overseas, but I did all

those jobs anyway because I

His residency status changed

when he married in 1994. At

that time, he would do two to

had to work," he said.

three jobs in a day.

Without directly referring to Bichara, Conejos invoked the image of a soldier who would desert or turn against his command in "a time of war" and that in such a scenario, the chief of staff himself could "shoot him."

Cash on hand

DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said the Office of Fiscal Management had reported that the Beirut mission should have at least \$17,848 cash on hand and \$69,917 in the bank.

These amounts did not include funds from the OWWA, Asuque said.

Conejos added that the embassy also got \$50,000 on July 14, which was drawn from the P150 million (around \$3 million) allotted by Malacañang for the OFWs' evacuation.

"With the figures we have

tunity when there was an opening for a pest management position at NMC-CREES. As an immediate relative of a local resident, Badilles got the job in 2000.

He then resigned from his Hyatt and CHC jobs because He worked for five years in he was to be assigned to NMC-CREES Rota.

> "I've been here for six years now. It's not exactly easy but it's been rewarding," he said.

> Badilles now owns a flower shop and a barbecue stall in his rented house in Songsong village.

> To his kababayans on island, Badilles is known for being the person to contact during a financial crisis.

> "I try to be open and helpful if I can. I love welcoming people at home. We eat together," he said.

> Badilles is currently the vice chairman of the Filipino Community of Rota, which was founded four years ago.

> There are about 1,000 Filipinos on the island.

WORKING

FROM PAGE 1

His primary designation is Integrated Pest Management coordinator, which requires him to do a lot of research, data gathering, mentoring, as well as grant writing for community programs.

"I'm often criticized because of my background but I show them that I can do the job. I've been through a lot but I believe in what I do. I give justice to my job. I work hard," said Badilles, who hails from Koronadal City, South Cotabato.

Badilles, who holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Southern Mindanao, first arrived on Saipan in 1987 as a farmer, planting crops in a private farm in Kagman.

He later became a janitor at Hyatt Regency Hotel and a baker for Mary's Bakery.

"It's so unlike my dream,

the housekeeping department of Hyatt from 9am to 4pm. From 4:30 to evening, he worked as maintenance staff at the Commonwealth Health Center. Early in the morning, he would find

"Life was hard but I kept going. My motto is work hard, work hard," he said.

time to do another job, usually

in the farm or bakery.

Badilles said he endured the hardship because he wanted to live a better life.

"I knew that things would get better. I took all the trials as challenges to excel and achieve. I could not settle for anything less," he said.

ceed, Badilles grabbed the oppor-

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See Bank of Saipan for full account disclosures detail

Fired up with his desire to suc-

Rene Salud dresses up little miss for pageant

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Philippine fashion guru and haute couture designer extraordinaire Rene Salud is currently on Saipan for a special purpose: to dress up an 8-year-old girl who will compete in tonight's Little Ms. CNMI Beauty Pageant.

Salud, who discovered Melanie Marquez—a simple city girl turned glamorous Ms. International—and top model, said he fully enjoys visiting Saipan.

"I love Saipan. It's so relaxing. There's no tension. I feel good and rejuvenated here," said Salud in an interview at the scenic and chic executive suite lounge at the 8th floor of Fiesta Resort & Spa yesterday afternoon.

Salud said his trip now is actually his fourth. He had been here to judge Filipinoorganized hair and fashion make-up contests.

"I've been coming back and forth," he said.

This time he will not judge but do real work, designing for 8-year-old Opal Hamilton Northen

"I've been invited by a personal friend to help out," said Salud.

He said there are also plans for him to do fashion shows on island. "I welcome that idea,"

Salud has done fashion shows all over the United States, some countries in Europe, Japan, China, and other cities in Asia.

"I also do projects in the provinces. I love working with people in the provinces," he said.

Right now, he is busy doing projects for government-sponsored fashion shows. He has projects with the departments of Tourism and Foreign Affairs.

He also serves as chair of the Mutya ng Pilipinas beauty pageant and several other city beauty contests in Metro Manila.

Stardom

Salud, who has helped countless unknowns reach the pinnacle of their modeling careers, began to make a name for himself "with the help of friends in the media."

He said his works were initially featured in Mod magazine and later in Mr. & Ms. magazine.

When his wards would win contests, he would be interviewed and featured in several other media—newspapers and TV.

"I realized that if you get yourself involved in a beauty contest, you're giving yourself a big break. When I was doing national beauty pageants, I was exposed to the whole nation," he said.

"I was able to carve a name for myself through beauty pageants," he admits.

Truly an artistic person, Salud later excelled in fashion design.

His inspiration? The diverse culture of the Philippines, he said.

"I'm very much inspired by our rich culture. I get ideas from the costumes of different tribes," he said.

Salud's works display a dominant ethnic Filipino theme with an international appeal.

Salud currently maintains four boutiques located in Makati, Alabang, Davao City, and Quezon Citu.

Also part of his daily routine is his regular hosting duties in the program Magandang Umaga Pilipinas on ABS-CBN.

Salud is the eldest of eight siblings with humble beginnings in San Juan, Batangas.

"My family was poor," he said without hesitation. "But thank God because I became instrumental in making their lives better."

It is this humble background that inspires him to help other people.

Salud said his goal is to put up his own "advocacy group" to help talented individuals lacking finances get free training in fashion design.

"I'm starting this project now. I want to be of help. I want to help train other people," he said.



LABOR FRONT

Casual employment

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE REPORTER

Q: What is casual employment?

A: A person may employ an alien worker for up to 16 hours in a 30-day period to provide services. According to Alien Labor Rules and Regulations, to secure approval for such employment, the potential employer must pay a nonrefundable, nontransferable application fee.

The employer and employee must file a joint casual employment sheet, signed by both parties. Such employment sheet should contain the name and Labor and Immigration Identification System number of the employee, the place to be worked, the tasks to be performed, the work hours, the compensation, and a statement signed under penalty of perjury that the employer will be liable for all expenses arising out of the employment including medical expenses.

Q: How are consensual transfers granted?

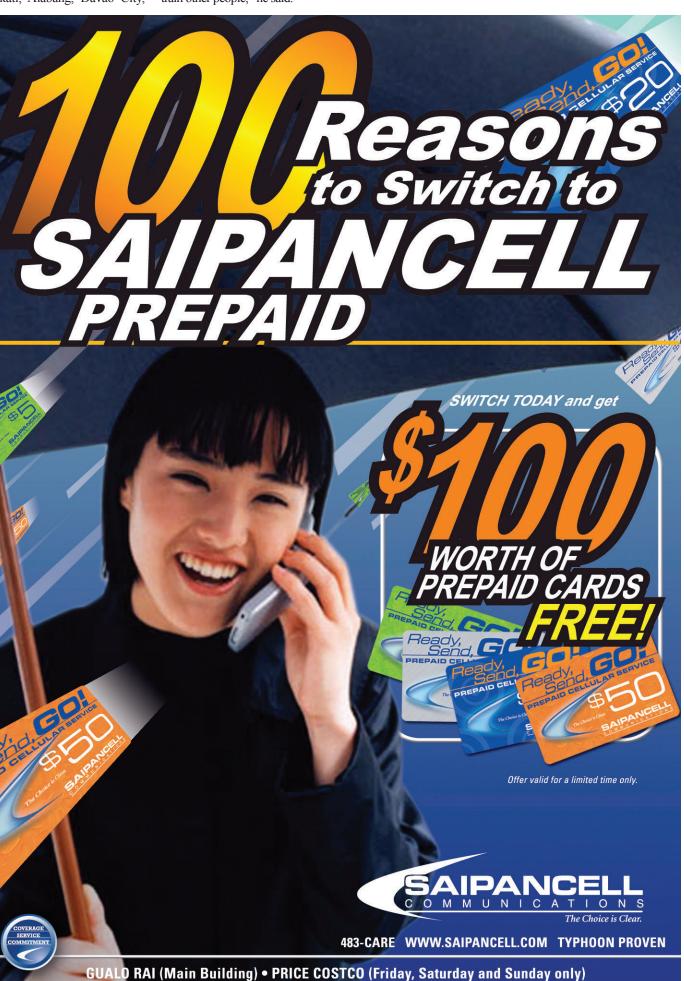
A: The Labor director or his or her designee may grant consensual transfers during the contract period with the permission of all parties provided the application is filed at least 10 days before the expiration of a contract.

The new employer shall assume all legal responsibilities for the transferred employee. If the transfer occurs during the initial contract period, the new employer shall reimburse the former employer for all actual costs associated with the recruitment and hiring of the alien worker.

No reimbursement shall be provided the former employer if the consensual transfer results from a finding that the former employer failed to pay the applicable minimum wage, failed to pay wages at least biweekly, or allowed the nonresident worker to work without a valid employment contract approved by Labor

Q: What will happen after the Labor director or his or her designee receives the documentation filed by the new employer for consensual transfers?

A: The Labor director or his or her designee should set an appointment for an interview with the current employer, the prospective employer, and the employee. The current employer shall provide evidence that the employer has fully paid all the wages of the employee as of the date of the appointment.



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GMA resting after a night at hospital

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was recovering from the flu on Friday, and doctors said she needed to rest in a hospital for another day.

"She is doing well," said Dr. Juliet Cervantes of the St. Luke's Medical Center, where the president was brought Thursday.

"She is better. Her fever is down," Cervantes told ABS-CBN television.

Arroyo, 59, canceled her public appearances Thursday, including a reception for Filipino-American rapper Allan Pineda from the band Black Eyed Peas and U.S. evangelist Rick Warren, author of the best-selling book "Purpose Driven Life."

Doctors said Arroyo needed to rest until Saturday.

want to limit visitors. We want Joven Cuanang said. her to rest," Cervantes said.

Arroyo had fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat and muscle pains when she was brought in a wheelchair to the hospital on Thursday after-

"As much as possible, we noon, St. Luke's Director Dr.

Arroyo started feeling ill late Wednesday after welcoming home a group of Filipino workers who fled from Lebanon, said presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye.

month that Arroyo has fallen ill. She was hospitalized for two days in late June after suffering from diarrhea, which doctors said was triggered by stress that had lowered her resistance to infection.

Japan pledges to help develop conflict-ravaged southern RP

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Japan pledged on Thursday to help develop southern Philippine regions ravaged by years of war between government troops and Muslim separatist guerrillas, a Japanese official said.

Japan would closely coordinate with Malaysia, which has deployed a peacekeeping contingent to the southern region of Mindanao, to provide economic assistance to the conflict-affected areas there, said Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Yoshinori Katori.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso made the pledge during a meeting with his Malaysian counterpart, Syed Hamid Albar, on the sidelines of an annual ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, according to Katori.

A Japanese government representative would travel to Mindanao to meet officials and study possible economic development and social projects that Tokyo cold help finance or enforce with Japanese technical assistance, he said.

Farmers group leader gunned down

By TERESA CEROJANO AP WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— Unidentified gunmen in the Philippines shot dead a farmers group leader and abducted another activist in separate incidents, police said Thursday, as an official warned the country may be blacklisted by the United Nations for a string of unsolved attacks on members of left-wing groups.

Ernesto Ladica, 43, a leader of the Misamis Oriental Farmers Association, was drinking coffee with his three sons when unidentified assailants barged into his house in Salay town and fatally shot him late Wednesday, police said, adding that the assailants later escaped on a motorcycle.

Salay is about 780 kilometers (485 miles) southeast of Manila.

'We're still investigating the incident and looking for other witnesses who could identify the suspects," said national police chief Oscar Calderon.

The left-wing Bayan Muna party, of which Ladica was a member, said it suspected soldiers were responsible, but didn't offer any evidence.

Also on Wednesday, three masked gunmen abducted a member of the Coalition Against Pollution, a left-wing group opposed to the operations of three foreign factories in northern Bulacan province,

police said.

Chief Superintendent Ismael Rafanan, the regional police chief, said he has ordered an investigation into the abduction of Ernesto Santiago, 46, in Pulilan town.

Police said the attackers, clad in camouflage shorts and rubber shoes, forced their way into Santiago's house and threatened to shoot his wife and two children before dragging him away.

The local human rights group Karapatan said since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo came to power in 2001, 713 civilians, including 303 left-wing activists, have been killed by suspected security forces. Ladica is the 114th

member of Bayan Muna slain since 2001, it said.

Purificacion Quisumbing, the head of the independent Commission on Human Rights, warned the Philippines was in danger of being blacklisted by the United Nations for failing to apprehend those responsible for a string of killings and abductions of activists.

She also said the government has been overdue, since 1992, in submitting a report on the human rights situation in the country—an obligation under human rights treaties signed by Manila.

"All these are possible basis for being blacklisted in the human rights system of the United Nations," she said.

Driver added to Marines' rape case

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— Government prosecutors on Thursday asked a Philippine court to reinstate a Filipino van driver as a co-accused of four U.S. Marines in a rape case filed by a 22-year-old Filipino woman

The justice department prosecutors asked the Makati Regional Trial Court to order the arrest of Timoteo Soriano Jr., the driver of the van where Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, 21, of St. Louis, Missouri allegedly raped the woman on Nov. 1. Three other Marines are accused of cheering him on during the assault.

Soriano was charged with rape along with the Marines in the original complaint filed in December, but was cleared by a court in Olongapo city, west of Manila, which previously handled the case.

In a motion filed in court, the prosecutors said a second investigation conducted on orders of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales showed probable cause to charge Soriano as co-conspirator since at the time of the rape "he was driving the van in a very low gear to give more opportunity to his co-conspirator to perpetuate his evil desire."

"Clearly, his participation was not merely companionship," they added.

Also on Thursday, Judge Benjamin Pozon granted defense lawyers' motion and ordered a police DNA analyst to submit the complete DNA patterns extracted from the woman's underwear and a condom allegedly used by Smith.



Filipino protesters picket Israeli Embassy, want end to fighting

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— About two dozen anti-war protesters picketed the Israeli Embassy in Manila on Thursday, waving placards and shouting slogans calling for an end to the Israeli offensive in Lebanon.

Small but noisy protests in the front of the embassy, located in a high-rise in the capital's financial district, have become an almost daily occurrence since Israel launched attacks July 12 after Lebanon-based Hezbollah guerrillas kidnaped two Israeli soldiers from the Israeli side of the border.

"We are here to call on the Israel government to stop the war they are waging against the Lebanese people," said protester Joey Ignacio from the "Stop the War" coalition.

"At the core of the Middle East conflict is the unflinching running out of funds.

U.S. support for Israel's aggressions," said Josua Mata, head of the left-wing Alliance of Progressive Labor.

The police special action force, dressed in camouflage uniforms, kept guard but did not intervene.

The Philippine government has said it is neutral in the conflict, as it struggles to evacuate some of the 30,000 Filipino workers in Lebanon, mostly domestic helpers. About 800 have returned home so far, but it wasn't clear how many wanted to leave their jobs in Lebanon.

The Department of Foreign Affairs insists the government has money for evacuations, but the Philippine ambassador in Beirut, Al Francis Bichara, has complained in TV and radio interviews that the embassy is

RP shares rise to 2-month high

Philippine shares rallied for a third day Thursday, climbing to a two-month high amid optimism about the nation's economic outlook following President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's address.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index rose 47.29 points, or 2.1 percent, to 2,336.42, marking its best finish since May 22. Thursday's rally brings the total index gain to 4.2 percent since Tuesday, the day after Arroyo's state-of-the-nation address.

"We have learned to invest in

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— the country based on fundamentals regardless of the political noise" caused by calls for Arrovo's ouster. Wealth Securities analyst Ricardo Puig said.

> "President Arroyo acknowledged that there was a fiscal crisis and she fixed it. Now she has a plan, and all the government projects lined up are economically productive," he said.

In her speech, Arroyo outlined an economic roadmap that included a spending plan worth around 1 trillion pesos (US\$19.2 billion; €15.2 billion), which emphasized infrastructure and social services.

PINOYSTYLE

Pinoy 'Pea' brings 'House' down



Philippine Presidential executive secretary Eduardo Ermita, second from right, talks with Black Eyed Peas members, from left, William James Adams known as will.i.am and Allen Pineda popularly known as Apl.de.ap and Rev. Rick Warren, right, author of the book "Purpose Driven Life" during their courtesy call at the Malacañang presidential palace in Manila on Thursday July 27, 2006.

BEP Manila concert to raise funds for landslide victims

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Black American hip-hop band's "Monkey Busi-Eyed Peas will perform a concert in the Philippines on Thursday to raise funds for victims of the February landslide that left more than 1,000 people dead, the band's Filipino-American rapper said.

Allen Pineda—known as Apl.de.ap. promised a "very energetic" performance in Manila for Filipino fans as part of the ness World Tour."

"We've always had a good welcome here in the Philippines," Pineda, who is of Filipino-African-American descent, told The Philippine Daily Inquirer. "It feels good to perform in front of an audience that embraces us so strongly."

He said the proceeds from the concert local fans, the Inquirer reported.

will go to victims of the Feb. 17 landslide that buried the entire Guinsaugon village in the central Philippines in one of the country's worst disasters.

Arriving from a concert in neighboring Taiwan, Pineda wore a shiny belt buckle adorned with a Philippine flag, and spoke in the Tagalog language to the delight of

By CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO . INQUIRER

The Filipino-American member of the popular American hip-hop group "Black Eyed Peas" brought the "House" down yesterday after being conferred a presidential award for his accomplishments in the music industry.

In Malacañang, which he referred to as the "House" at one point, Black Eyed Peas member Allen Pineda Lindo a.k.a. Apl.de.ap not only wowed the audience with his dance moves and trendy songs but also with his fellow band member's testimonial on how much he loved the Philippines.

Longing for home

Group member and long time friend of Pineda's, William James Adams, a.k.a. will.i.am, said he once saw him crying because he missed his home country.

Pineda, who is of Filipino-African-American descent, was given up for adoption and brought to the United States.

Presidential Merit Award

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita presented the award on behalf of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was down with the flu and had to cancel her appointments yesterday.

"Not only have you come back home but you brought the Philippines to the whole world," Ermita told Pineda shortly after conferring on him the Presidential Medal of Merit and before the pair performed their popular hit songs "The Apl Song" and "Bebot."

In the 'House'

"I'm in the House and you know I got to see the people she (President) works with and the dedication these guys have," said Pineda.

Big dream

"This was a big dream for me and it feels good to be embraced," he also told reporters.

He said he never thought he would be able to do the kind of music he does today and also meet President Arroyo.

Ermita marveled at Pineda's achievements, and said the latter set a good example for Filipinos.

"He has succeeded (in his field) and I even heard he is a multimillionarie," Ermita said.

"This is something we should thank President Arroyo for because she recognizes the Filipino talent from whatever kind or way of life he comes from."

Kate Hudson for Kamiseta: Always famous

By JENNI EPPERSON **INQUIRER**

Kamiseta, leading specialty retailer of fashionable casual apparel, accessories and footwear, brings to Manila's larger-than-life billboards the larger-thanlife Kate Hudson.

Like her famous "Almost Famous" character, "Penny Lane," Kate is the embodiment of modern hippie chic. With her tank tops and jeans mixed with luxurious coats and designer handbags, Kate's style makes it easy to understand how she's become an oh-so-cool boho luxe babe.

Mr. Gonzalo Roque III, president of Kamiseta, talks about Kamiseta's new "it" girl.

Why Kate Hudson as the new Kamiseta Girl?

We admire her carefree, fun and relaxed sense of style. She is fresh, bubbly and fashionable. She's a celebrity but she's not overexposed. When she acknowledged that she liked Kamiseta, we knew we had found our endorser.

How did you get her?

We've had two Hollywood stars as endorsers before, so we knew what we had to do. We had to present the brand, our collections and our previous campaigns. Celebrities like Kate are presented with plenty of endorsement opportunities, but they will only come on board if they like the product. After several trips to the United States and months of discussions with her publicists, managers and lawyers, we finally got her to agree to be our Kamiseta girl.

For Kate, it was about the collection and the campaign. Once she was on board, we needed a photographer with flair, someone extremely talented to complement our global campaign. We were very attracted to the work of Sante D'Orazio, an Italian photographer whose works and books are sold in galleries in New York.

We shot on location at the Stahl House on Hollywood Hills ("An architectural masterpiece perched at the top of the Sunset Strip looking out at a blanket of lights"—The Los Angeles Times). A famous movie location since the '60s, it has appeared more recently in "The Marrying Man." "Nurse Betty," "Galaxy Quest" and "Why Do Fools Fall In Love.'

How did the shoot go?

It was a perfect day. Since we were on the hills, we had a cool breeze. The house was spotless and the caterer had already set a great breakfast spread.

As Sante was instructing his staff where to put the lights and props, Kate arrived in a tweed trench coat, sporting a crocodile handbag and knee-high boots. Imagine our shock when, underneath, all she wore was short shorts and a tank top. She really had that aura of a Hollywood child! You would've thought she'd be a diva, with Goldie Hawn for a mom and Kurt Russell for a stepdad. But she was pleasant, very nice and professional. After a quick chat with us, she went off to makeup at once. Her rapport with Sante was casual and fun, as they had worked together before. They kept laughing the whole time. It was a good shoot.

What's Kamiseta's plan?

Our company's goal has always been to become an international brand. We're currently in six countries: the Philippines, the United States (Guam), Dubai, Bahrain, Malaysia and Indonesia. We are the first Filipino brand to penetrate the Malaysian and Indonesian markets. We project to be in at least 15 countries with 100 stores globally in the next five years. We are very proud to say that a Philippine brand can truly be a global player.

It takes a lot of work and discipline to be accepted. But when they do accept us, the gratification is immense. To everyone who has nothing better to say about our country, here's something they can't deny: Philippine fashion can be world-class.

What is Kamiseta's passion?

Our passion is to make our customer have fun while shopping in Kamiseta. Our fashion emphasizes a lifestyle that is active and carefree. Our new store concept focuses on a timeless appeal that is rooted in the classic Kamiseta heritage.

It is truly a source of Pinoy pride to hear of successful stories like Kamiseta. Kamiseta's true Pinov retail success is not just measured by how many of our kababayans enjoy its products, but also by how people all over the world, especially famous ones like Golden Globe winner Kate Hudson, love them, too. She sure makes it looks like fun being a girl!



Why is Robin Padilla making this movie?

By NINI VALERA INQUIRER

YLAYA ALFONSO, CAVITE—

"The best thing about making this movie is, I get to kiss Regine (Velasquez)," said Robin Padilla on the set of "Till I Met You."

"I also get to ride a horse," Robin said. "It's one of my greatest highs right now." The set was located on a sprawling ranch here, owned by horse enthusiast and businessman Chito Panganiban.

Whether he was romancing Regine for the photo ops or flirting with the fans, Robin turned on the charm, lighting up a gloomy day last week—a stretch of cool winds and scattered rain showers—like

the effervescent and restless star that he was

"It's good to be working again," he said. "I've missed acting."

Last seen in the quirky comedy "La Visa Loca," Robin has not had a movie project for nearly a year.

"Till I Met You, "a movie coproduced by GMA Films and Viva Entertainment and directed by Mark Reyes, marks Robin's re-coupling with Regine after their 2000 hit, "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw," directed by Joyce Bernal.

Robin revealed that he is currently negotiating a show with GMA 7. His last TV job, as program host, was ABS-CBN's "Kamao."

"I'm hoping for an action series," he said. "I miss doing action. That's

what I was born to do."

Robin was also born to be a star.

At 36, he still exudes the rugged boyish charm that made him the object of affection of fans and all his leading ladies.

But off-screen romantic dalliances were now part of his past, Robin vowed. "I'm very happy now with my life."

He nurtures a long-distance relationship with wife Liezl Sicangco, who is based in Australia with their four children.

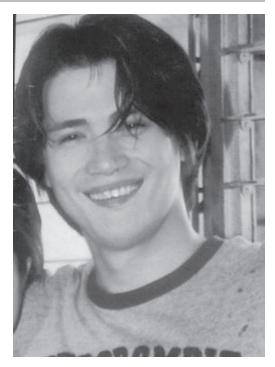
"Liezl kept the family afloat when I wasn't working," Robin admitted. "I am so grateful for that. It's no joke to maintain a household and send kids to school in Australia. She had to dip into

our children's trust funds, and that made me very upset. I was frustrated because I couldn't do anything about it, except pray."

A devout Muslim, Robin brought his red prayer rug to the Tagaytay set. He took a break from the shoot to pray at 3:30 p.m. on the dot. His religion, he said, has kept him grounded.

He also brought with him tons of barako coffee. "I can't live without coffee," he confided. "I drink Batangas coffee. I can't afford Starbucks."

At 36, Robin Padilla still exudes the rugged boyish charm that made him the object of affection of fans and all his leading ladies.



Ohhh gee, Ogie!

By DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL INOUIRER

It's always a delight to be around Ogie Alcasid. His warmth is genuine. Things are never "showbiz-ized" between us. Our friendship has a mark of its own. So what's supposed to be an interview ends up being a heartwarming chat between friends.

Ogie is all agog preparing for his birthday concert, "Komikonsiyerto," on Aug. 5 at the Aliw Theater (call 819-9999 for tickets). The concert will showcase his versatility both as a hit maker and comedian. His guests include Michael V, Wendell Ramos, Francine Prieto, Ruffa Mae Quinto and Lovi Poe.

"For me, it's harder to make people laugh with my antics than to move them with my songs. It's my birthday gift to myself to try to do both for my fans during the concert."

Ogie's turning 39. He laughs and says, "One more year to explore before I hit the big four-oh! It has always been my dream to invite my close friends for a cruise on my birthday. We'll just sail off wherever the wind takes us!"

He has sailed the turbulent waters of intrigue for so long, that he has become immune to them already. "For instance, this never-ending talk about Regine Velasquez and me having an affair has reached insane proportions. It no longer bothers me as much as it amuses me. Besides, my wife Michelle and I understand each other beyond anybody's understanding."



Ogie Alcasid is all agog preparing for his birthday concert, "Komikonsiyerto," on Aug. 5 at the Aliw Theater.

Jessica Soho: On the record

A peek into the purse of award-winning broadcast journalist Jessica Soho yields curious discoveries.

She's not lugging around the 1999 Peabody trophy (the Pulitzer of broadcasting) or the 1993 TOYM (The Outstanding Young Men) medal—just two of her numerous achievements; instead we find, as she fishes them out, Nokia 9500 and 9300 cell phones and her passport, plus stacks upon stacks of research material.

That's because as reporter, TV host (of the Saturday night show, "Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho") and vice president of GMA 7 News and Public Affairs, Jessica's work is never done.

She explains that everyday, anywhere she may be, she receives ratings reports and news story lists on her fax-ready mobile phones.

The passport, she points out, is always on hand just in case she's suddenly dispatched abroad—anywhere from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

As for the research material ...

Let's just say she has come prepared for this Inquirer interview—which is, of course, intruding into her job of overseeing "24 Oras," "Saksi" and "Flash Report," but we can't keep it short (it takes over two hours)

In the middle of the exchange, she receives the story lineup for that evening's prime time news program.

She takes her job seriously, that's clear. It's no joke being in charge of the 880-strong News and Public Affairs department.

"That's 300 plus for News alone," she gasps.

She admits that, as boss, she tends to be too hands-on, "bordering on being OC."

Believe it or not, she personally did the grocery shopping for the network's Mount Everest team.

"I made sure they had hibe and bagoong as baon to Nepal," Jessica recounts, chuckling.

How hectic is your life, exactly? I'm like a child star, deprived of childhood.

Even though you no longer host the daily morning show?

Yes, it's crazy, because I'm now running the newsroom day-to-day.

You're in the studio when "24

Oras" goes on air?

Yes. I make it a point to be in the office 3pm. onwards, monitoring the news minute per minute. A big story may break in the middle of a newscast. Everything is fluid and, because of the limited running time, some stories are dropped from the lineup. Often, we have to make decisions on the spot.

For example?

The school shooting in Beslan, in the former USSR (2004). We scrapped our original lineup.



How do you choose stories to be aired?

Of course, the news item should be of national interest. Plane crashes and terrorist bombings are no-brainers. But it gets tricky when there are no big stories that stand out. That's when we consider the intricacies of the medium—we make sure that a story comes out with a good video.

What if it's a good story, but there's no accompanying video?

Sometimes we still air it, if it's really big.

What time does your day start?

Around 10 or 11 a.m., I usually start making calls. If I'm lucky, I find time to go on the treadmill. But if I have a shoot for "Kapuso," I'm up at 9 a.m.

How many times a week do you shoot for "Kapuso"?

Sometimes twice ... But if I'm going abroad, more than twice.

When you're abroad, who runs the newsroom?

I do, by remote control. I call the

news desk to find out what's happening and to tell them which stories to pursue. They call me if problems arise.

Do you bring your many gadgets abroad?

My cell phones have built-in fax. I get the lineup, and ratings, daily.

So you need to carry a big bag all the time!

My bag is my house ... and I have two of these!

What are your other duties in the newsroom?

Naku, I do big and small things for reporters. When we sent a team to Mount Everest, I did the groceries for them. I asked what they wanted—chocolates, instant noodles, junk food? I even bought monggo, bagoong (shrimp paste), tuyo (dried fish) and hibe (dried shrimp). (Mountain climber) Romy Garduce was astonished that we got the bagoong through customs.

These little touches are important when you're sending people off to battle, so to speak. That's also part of my job, to look after their welfare. Imagine, I was sending five people to trek in snow for 11 days!

You're at once a mentor and tormentor.

I terrorize them, yes. It's not easy. I've come to terms with the fact that I'm the kontrabida in their lives. But there are times when I feel I need to show my appreciation. For example, it's a tradition at the office that, on Noche Buena, I buy them Majestic ham and cook macaroni salad.

How much time do you have for yourself? Very little.

What do you do to unwind?

I cook. It's good therapy. I go to the Lung Center [flea market] every Sunday and buy organic vegetables.

How much air time do you allot to police stories?

We don't do police stories that often. Sheila Coronel's group (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism) conducted a study commissioned by the De La Salle University (2006), which showed that we have less crime stories compared to [ABS-CBN's] "TV Patrol." Usually, we

have two to three stories, and two of them would be about accidents.

Our tagline is: "Ang imporante, buhay ng tao (What's important is people's lives)." Our reports always work within the context of public safety. We acquired a computer software that can situate crime hotspots in the city. We contextualize [the information]. Why do robberies occur in that place? Is it because there's a busted streetlamp? But really, we have less crime stories now.

Is this a network policy?

It's not really ... in black and white, but it's a conscious effort.

How many entertainment stories do you air nightly?

Three voiced-over show biz stories with short VTRs. "Chika Minute" comes out thrice on "24 Oras."

How do you handle entertainment news, especially since the network also has its own stable of stars?

Although we help promote some of our entertainment programs, we still have to report news that involves our contract artists. Like, we reported on Richard Gomez's problems with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). Same with Ethel Booba and Alex Crisano [who had a violent fight] in Boracay—it so happened that our reporter, Lala Roque, was billeted in the same hotel as Ethel and Alex.

What about movies produced by GMA Films?

That's also about our stars, but we instruct reporters to look for a news angle, and not make it an outright promo. We deal with advertisers the same way. One company threatened to pull out its ads because we did a report on its environmental violations. But the stand of Mr. Gozon (lawyer Felipe Gozon, GMA 7 president) is that we cannot suppress news. I myself can be hard-headed in this aspect because I'm from the old school of journalism.

What was your favorite beat as a reporter?

Defense, where I earned my stripes. It was also perfect timing because that was the season of coups, the transition years after Edsa I.

Inquirer

OPINYON

has not only seized the initiative

but also set the agenda with

new issues. She has flung the

gauntlet at her enemies, and has

designed a political battle she

wants to be fought the way she

wants it and on issues advanta-

The aura of triumphalism is

The Sona's Potemkin village

eaving aside, in the meantime, consideration of the huge economic costs required to bankroll the four "super regions" envisaged in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's recent State of the Nation Address (Sona) as the corridor of national prosperity in the next three years, this article offers a short-term perspective of the Sona. It argues that the Sona is a political document more than a roadmap for economic transformation.

The Sona outlines a political strategy with two objectives, one, short-term, and the other, long-term, that is up to 2010. The first seeks to win the mid-term election next year; and the second, to overcome the legitimacy issue arising from the fiercely disputed results of the 2004 elections. The second is a strategy designed to skirt the legitimacy issue by refocusing the nation's attention to a new agenda set out by the Sona.

This short-term political framework allows us to be aware that regardless of what the President claims, we have entered a highly politicized season dominated by the theme of winning a mid-term mandate that is extremely crucial to the administration's survival till 2010 and its capacity to deliver on its extravagant promises contained in the Sona.

So, let's not be beguiled by the President's statement saying, "I stand before you today to deliver a state of the nation that is focused on what the people want; the people want to know the plan to put us on the path of prosperity... I am not here to talk about politics; I am here to talk about what the people want; details on the state of the nation and what their government is doing to make progress every single day."

The Sona was scarcely about the actual state of the nation as of July 24, 2006, but about the state of the nation in 2010—granting she serves out her full term. The new agenda offers a tantalizing vision of Potemkin villages of prosperity while

downgrading at least two important issues—constitutional change and human rights violations—and taking our eyes off the Garcillano tapes.

With the Sona, President Arroyo fired the opening salvo of the 2007 elections. Despite the economic accent of the Sona (two-thirds of the text is about the super regions), the political tone of the next 12 months is set by just a few lines there that cancel out what she said in the preceding paragraphs. This underlying political theme is set in the concluding paragraph: "After three years, 11 months, and six days, I shall relinquish the presidency, with much if not all that I have outlined completed. I don't want it said then that, in the end, I defeated my enemies. I would rather have it said that all of us, you and I, friends and

if her enemies do not join her bandwagon, they would either be left behind or be crushed, if they continue to hatch plots to depose her. The statement rings with unmistakable hubris. Listen to

this: "For those who want to pick up old fights, we're game, but what a waste of time. Why not join hands instead? Join

hands in the biggest challenge of all, where we all win or we all lose: the battle for the survival and progress of our one and only country."

Speaking from a position of strength after repelling all challenges to topple her during the past

Analysis
By Amando Doronila
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

to power.

unmistakable in her statement that is arrogantly definitive: she would relinquish the presidency after three years, 11 months and six days, with a legacy of fulfilled promises. No ifs, ands or buts, she will hold on

geous to her.

There is nothing in the Sona to indicate that the political battle of 2007 will be fought over constitutional change. "Cha-cha" [Charter change] has now been effectively side-tracked. The Sona has changed Cha-cha's timetable. The strategy to refocus the political agenda to winning the 2007 elections is built on the belief that the mid-term polls are the key to wiping off the board the legitimacy issue. The calculation seems to be that winning in 2007—that is having majorities in both houses of Congress—would give the administration a clear new mandate and vote of confidence. With that mandate, it seems to be the belief, that the people

would forget about the tapes, and with that issue

behind, the government can push the economic

part of the Sona agenda and deliver results.

It appears that administration strategists believe that legitimacy can be rebuilt on new electoral mandates and delivery of results and services—that is, making trains run on time and creating jobs—to compensate for the appalling abuse of power and human rights atrocities. This is the reason the administration is single-mindedly focusing on the 2007 elections and will not spare any resource to win them. The Sona agenda was framed with that objective.

The Sona was scarcely about the actual state of the nation as of July 24, 2006, but about the state of the nation in 2010...[offering] a tantalizing vision of Potemkin villages of prosperity while downgrading at least two important issues—constitutional change and human rights violations—and taking our eyes off the Garcillano tapes.

foes today, achieved together a country progressive, prosperous."

This statement is not an invitation to national unity. If the opposition and the President's enemies have not yet realized it, the statement is an arrogant declaration of political invincibility and an ultimatum. It sends the implicit message that

two years-impeachment, resignation demands, coup attempts, etc.—the President is laying down the terms of engagement not only for the 2007 electoral battle but more so to guarantee her political survival till 2010. In the Sona, she has written the terms of the treaty of a political settlement or capitulation to her vanquished opponents. She

Impressions from a brochure

he demonstrators fought off rain, the hostile presence of riot cops and the smug indifference of the cows, also called Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's allies, being fattened inside the Batasan complex of the House of Representatives. I sympathized with them mightily not merely because I shared their sentiments and cause, but also because I too had to fight off something heroically. I had to fight off sleep.

The only reason I couldn't do something else was that I had committed to comment on Arroyo's speech on ABC-5 television. That wasn't a speech, that was a brochure. A brochure such as you may find in the Department of Tourism, with its idyllic and completely hyperbolic description of the lay of the land. The brochure is more interesting. It keeps you awake.

I seriously wondered if Arroyo hadn't discovered a new offensive strategy, which was to bore people to death. That is by no means completely facetious or metaphorical. I took a lot of coffee to keep myself from falling into Morpheus' embrace and frayed my nerves that night.

At the end of my mighty struggle, I came away with several impressions. A coherent response was not what that brochure provoked.

My first impression was hearing all over again the "Hello, Garci" tape. That was so not just because it was the same unique DNA-imprinted voice being conscripted for pretty much the same reason, which was to put the wool over

the public's eyes. It was also because the speaker showed the same passion for micro-management. It answers the question of why she personally called up then-election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano with a persistence that tried the patience of Garci himself, rather than had a minion do it for her, thus giving her space for deniability. She just had to sink to that level.

My second impression while looking at the reporters and announcers at the Batasan being besieged by wind and rain, their hair tousled furiously this way and that, was that God was making a comment on the proceedings. I remembered that shortly before that, Arroyo had just

repeated her favorite line, which was that God put her there. The real God, who is not Garci, must have heard, and decided to send a storm at least, if not a thunderbolt, in her direction. The caption that rose in my mind at the scene at the Batasan was: "A lot of wind."

My third impression was that Arroyo's intro in her State of the Nation Address (Sona) showed exactly what was wrong with it. The Sona would later turn out to be a division of spoils, or a sharing of loot with her favorite allies under the guise of breaking the stranglehold of "imperial Manila." Or at least it was a promise of a division of

spoils or sharing of loot. I don't know if the congressmen or congresswomen bit into it hook, line and sinker, but they seemed to be a gullible lot. The collective IQ of most of the people there could not have exceeded the speaker's weight. As newly elected Senate President Manuel Villar would say later on, they seemed ready to applaud anything. The image that leaped

to mind was a live comedy show where the props-people intermittently and frequently raised signs before the audience that said, "Laughter" and "Applause."

But as I was saying, Arroyo began her speech by talking (all too briefly) about the plight of the overseas Filipino

workers in Lebanon. It reminded me of Fr. Agustin Advincula's plaintive cry about where the OFW billions have gone. You have P7.6 billion in cash reserves of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and you have P100 billion in savings, and you can spare only P150 million to evacuate an entire horde of Filipinos trapped in a war-torn country? And give the rest-or at least promise to do so—to loyal lieutenants. Punish the "modern heroes" and reward the modern heels? Story of this nation's life.

My fourth impression was that, then as now, Arroyo has a habit of crediting

herself for all the good that happens in this country and exculpating herself from all the bad in it. At one point, she even took credit for Jollibee Foods Corp. putting up a place in the southern province province of Basilan. But what did she say when it came to the killings? "I condemn the political killings in the strongest terms." And she went on to cajole the witnesses to come out and testify.

That is not unlike saying, "I condemn crime in the strongest terms." But, madam, it is precisely the task of government to stop crime and extrajudicial killings. It is precisely the task of government to create the climate that stops crime and extra-judicial killings. When they happen, and to the extent they do today, government is to blame as surely as the direct authors of these crimes themselves. You are to blame as surely as if you pulled the trigger yourself. The inability to stop these things by itself voids your claim to existence. What are you saying—these things are the fault of the witnesses who do not come out to damn them? Government is excused if they never do so? Acsa Ramirez came out to tell what she knew, and look what you did to her. Francisco Gudani and Alexander Balutan came out to tell what they knew, and look what you did to them.

My fifth impression was déjà vu. Arroyo ended her speech by saying: "After three years, 11 months, and six days, I shall relinquish the presidency, with much if not all that I have outlined

I seriously wondered if Arroyo hadn't discovered a new offensive strategy, which was to bore people to death. That is by no means completely facetious or metaphorical. I took a lot of coffee to keep myself from falling into Morpheus' embrace and frayed my nerves that night.

and 24 days before, that was nearly exactly what she said too: "If we achieve these, my successor as president will be in a good position to lead the Philippines through the next decisive steps for the strong and modern society." She said that in her (in)famous speech about not running again and instead leaving her successor a nice legacy. She never had a successor. She ran again and stole the elections.

completed." Three years, six months,

Ask yourself seriously: Will she really relinquish her position in 2010? Indeed, will she ever do?

That brings me to my last, and lasting, impression. Be afraid. Be very, very afraid.



There's The Rub

By CONRADO DE QUIROS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SAMU'T SARI



BAYANI

Bayani Association officers and members pose beside the United Filipino Organization's float before the Liberation Day parade



SANTACRUZAN

From left, Nick Malonzo (Bayani member), Rose Guirit-Agulto (Bayani officer and Mrs. Vizminda 2005), Jermarld Mabuti (escort), and Dory Mabuti (Bayani officer) during the Liberation Day parade on July 4, 2006.





TREE PLANTING Members of the Filipino group MOVERS pose with officers and other members of the environmental group Beautify CNMI during a tree planting activity last week during which they planted hundreds of coconut trees on the island.



From left, PILCOWA members Jhonnette Principe (Bayani association editorial staff), Eric Dalangin (escort) and Jofre Macam (Bayani member) during the Liberation Day parade on July 4, 2006.



NEW BAYANI OFFICERS

The newly elected Bayani Association executive officers for year 2006-2007 are, from left, Juan Gacayan (Marshall II), Nicolas Malonzo (PRO External), Maydeline Vidal (Treasurer), Fernan Enano (Asst. Secretary), Dory Mabuti (VP External),

Erlinda Pido (President), Lynie Meriveles (VP Internal), Mylene Macapagal (Secretary), Julie Degayo (Asst. Treasurer), Ana De Guzman (Auditor), Onofre Macam (PRO Internal), and Ricardo Manzano (Marshall I)



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy birthday greetings go out to Shirley "Leah" Igrobay who celebrates her birthday today, July 29. Greetings come from your loved ones and friends.



LEADER-**SHIP TRAIN-**

ING **Bayani** officers and members pose with Welfare Officer Mary Dait and speakers of the Leadership training that was held at the Filipino **Workers Resource** Center on July 9.



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